

FIFTY YEARS FORWARD

The story of guide dogs in Britain



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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**



Top left:
Edmondscote Manor at Leamington Spa was bought in 1941 as the Association's first permanent training centre.

Centre left:
The Exeter centre, Cleve House, came next in 1950.

Bottom left:
Folly Court, Wokingham, the latest centre, opened in 1977.

Top right:
Nuffield House, Bolton, was opened officially by Princess Alexandra in 1961.

Centre right:
Princess Alexandra House, Forfar, opened in 1965.

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Published by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.
March 1981

£ 1.00

10-14-81

P.O. #D38845

First Steps

Through the ages dogs have served and befriended men in countless ways as working partners, guards and companions. But perhaps the finest chapter in this long history opened little more than 50 years ago.

Guide dog training began in Britain in the late summer of 1931 in Wallasey, Cheshire. The pioneers started with little more than their enthusiasm and the generous support of a crusading American woman who had launched the guide dog movement in Switzerland and America. But when the first four guide dog owners returned home in October 1931 from the makeshift training centre in Wallasey, a trail had been blazed that was to be followed by thousands of others.

Six months after getting his guide dog, one member of that first course, Allen Caldwell, wrote, *'Flash has revolutionised my outdoor life.'* It is a tribute that has been echoed down the years many times.

The British guide dog movement has come a long way since 1931. Primitive training facilities have been replaced by five modern training centres. A handful of supporters has become a network of 300 voluntary fund-raising branches and many more individuals and groups that raise money for guide dogs. A highly-organised breeding and puppy-walking scheme now ensures that the best possible dogs are available for training.

Looking back, it is perhaps surprising that organised guide dog training did not start earlier. Dogs had been associated with the blind as protectors and guides, in however primitive a form, for at least 1,000 years. There are innumerable examples in European art of the blind accompanied by dogs. Even the publication in Vienna in 1819 of a *Textbook for Teaching the Blind*, which describes the training of a dog with a rigid leash to lead the blind, failed to evoke a significant response. It was not until a century later that an event occurred which led to the growth of the modern guide dog movement.

During the First World War a doctor looking after war-wounded in Germany was called away from a blind man he was walking with in the grounds of a hospital. The doctor left his alsatian with the man and was subsequently so impressed by the dog's behaviour that he decided to start experiments in training dogs to act as guides for the blind.

By 1923 a guide dog training centre had been established at Potsdam which trained several thousand dogs in the next ten years. This work soon came to the attention of a wealthy American, Mrs Dorothy Harrison Eustis, who was breeding and training alsatians in Switzerland for the customs service, the army and the police. After visiting the Potsdam centre, Mrs Eustis was impressed and wrote an article for the American *Saturday Evening Post* of October 1927.



Although the modern guide dog movement has its origins in the training of dogs in Germany to guide ex-servicemen blinded in the First World War, it was a wealthy American, Mrs Dorothy Harrison Eustis, whose energy and enthusiasm was responsible for developing the work internationally during the late 1920s and 1930s. She is seen here at the training centre she established at Vevey in Switzerland. The name she chose for the centre, L'Oeil qui Voit (The Seeing Eye), was also used for the centre that she founded in 1929 in the United States.

A few days after the magazine appeared a young, blind American, Morris Frank, was told about the article. Frank bought a copy of the magazine. The five cents that it cost him, he said later, *'bought an article that was worth more than a million dollars to me. It changed my whole life.'*

He was so excited by the article that he decided to approach Mrs Eustis in Switzerland. *'I want one of those dogs,'* he wrote. *'Thousands of blind people like me abhor being dependent on others. Help me and I will help them.'*

His enthusiasm infected Mrs Eustis. She immediately arranged for Elliott Humphrey, who was in charge of her kennels, to study the work in Germany and then return to train a dog in Switzerland. As soon as this was done Morris Frank was sent for and a few weeks later, with 'Buddy' at his side, Frank became America's first guide dog owner.

As a result of this experience, Mrs Eustis set up a guide dog centre, L'Oeil qui Voit (The Seeing Eye), at Vevey in Switzerland and later established the first school for training dogs in the United States. In the ensuing years she devoted herself, and much of her wealth, to the development of the guide dog movement. She travelled widely lecturing about her work and soon, in 1930, articles about it began to appear in the British press.

Among those who became interested in the possibility of setting up a guide dog organisation in Britain were Miss Muriel Crooke, an alsatian enthusiast who lived in Wallasey, Cheshire, and Mrs Rosamund Bond, a breeder and exhibitor of alsatians. They decided to write to Mrs Eustis and after an exchange of correspondence the three women met in London on 23 September 1930.

Mrs Eustis said that she would lend a trainer to run a trial scheme in Britain. The latter part of 1930 and the first half of



A rare picture of Miss Muriel Crooke, one of the founders of the British guide dog movement, taken at the Tollgate House Breeding Centre in 1971, with a white alsatian, Usher. A very self-effacing woman, she would not let anyone take her picture if she could avoid it. She died as she would have wished - exercising her dogs.



exercised. I have been told an article is appearing in country life on my dogs, or rather a letter, and an article in the Sept. The world to-day looking forward to seeing you, sincerely, A. H. Eustis

Before turning her energies to the development of guide dog training Mrs Eustis had been breeding and training alsatians for customs, army and police work in Switzerland. This postcard from her Fortunate Fields Kennels at Mount Pelerin is part of the early correspondence she exchanged with Miss Muriel Crooke. It is postmarked 29 July 1930.

The first effort to raise funds to start the training of Guide Dogs
PLEASE READ PAGE 1 and CENTREPIECE.

SCHEDULE
OF —

Open Alsatian Dog Show

To be held under Kennel Club Rules, by the
Alsatian League & Club of Great Britain
(LIVERPOOL SUB-BRANCH)

AT THE
AUDITORIUM, PORT SUNLIGHT,
TO START THE WORK OF
Dog Guides for the Blind
IN ENGLAND.

ON
Saturday, November 1st, 1930.

Dogs can be carried on the Birkenhead Trains and Buses.

Judge:
MONSIEUR GEORGES BARAIS,
President of "La Société du Chien de Berger Allemand."

GUARANTORS TO THE KENNEL CLUB:
Mr J. H. SCOTT, Winbush, Gores Lane, Freshfield
Mr J. F. CHERRY, Church, Woodhey Road, Rock Ferry
Mr J. W. BIRKELL, Abbott's Farm, Sutton, St. Helens
Miss M. F. CROOKE, 3 Warren Drive, Wallasey

Benching 12.30 p.m. Judging 1.0 p.m.
Show will close at 6.0 p.m.

ENTRIES CLOSE OCTOBER 27th.

OLD CALABAR Bench and Feed. JEYES' Disinfectant.

J. F. B. & Co., Printers, 14, Cullen Street, Southdown Road.

THE RING MEASURES 30 x 15 YARDS.

THE JUDGE IS ONE OF THE LEADING AUTHORITIES ON THE BREED IN FRANCE.

A page from the programme of an open alsatian dog show on which Miss Muriel Crooke has written, 'The first effort to raise funds to start the training of guide dogs'.

William Debetaz, the trainer sent by Mrs Eustis from her centre in Switzerland to train the first four British guide dogs and their blind owners, with Judy, who was shortly to become Musgrave Frankland's guide dog. Debetaz later joined The Seeing Eye in the United States and became vice-president in charge of training.



1931 were now devoted to setting up the nucleus of an organisation and finding a suitable training spot. In February 1931, Miss Crooke and Mrs Bond, together with two new supporters, Captain Alan Sington and Lady Kitty Ritson, went to London for a meeting with the National Institute for the Blind. Here they discovered to their dismay that, strictly speaking, they had been acting illegally in raising £284 for their training scheme.

Nevertheless, the Guide Dog Committee, as it had become known, were determined to go ahead and a solution was found by affiliating the Committee to the Institute.

It was decided to conduct the trial scheme near Miss Crooke's home in Wallasey, and a piece of land and a garage in Cardigan Road, New Brighton, were rented as a dogroom and store. The trainer lent by Mrs Eustis, William Debetaz, arrived in England on 1 July 1931 accompanied by Elliott Humphrey, who selected seven of 28 alsatian bitches that had been acquired from various sources. Humphrey returned to Switzerland and Debetaz began work.

The first class assembled in October. Writing to Miss Crooke from Switzerland on 19 October, Humphrey said, *'I suppose the class will be finishing about the time you get this letter... tell them all they have my heartiest good wishes.'*

'Without you,' he continued, *'the work could not have been done. I only hope that it has been done in such a manner that you will be glad to have been connected with it and that the men will have done their work so that as they go out with their new eyes you will have a real catch in your throat as you see the shuffle gone from their feet and their heads thrown back as they take a new outlook on life. No words of mine nor of theirs can thank you for your part in helping them to such new liberty as they may find.'*

The first four guide dog 'units' to be trained in Britain, seen here in Wallasey, Cheshire, about the time that their training finished in October 1931. From the left, Allen Caldwell with Flash, G W Lamb with Meta, Musgrave Frankland with Judy and Thomas Ap Rhys with Folly. Ap Rhys was to use guide dogs for the next 48 years and died in 1979 at the age of 82 while retraining with his sixth dog.



The liberty they found was eloquently described six months later by all four members of that first class.

'Not only has my dog given me glorious freedom and independence, never known since pre-war days,' wrote Allen Caldwell, 'but delightful companionship.'

'With Folly,' wrote Thomas Ap Rhys, 'I do not mind walking at the fastest pace or even running with her.' He was to use guide dogs for the next 48 years and died in 1979 at the age of 82 while retraining with his sixth dog.

'After negotiating an obstacle,' wrote G W Lamb, 'we went away merrily, the crowd saying what a good dog it was.'

Musgrave Frankland declared, *'A guide dog is almost equal in many ways to giving a blind man sight itself. Judith has been worth her weight in gold ... I would not be without her for a day.'*

There was clearly no looking back now and Mrs Eustis continued to advise the embryo organisation and help financially. Earlier, in one of her many letters to Miss Crooke, she had written *'... you have got to make a firm decision whether you are starting a piece of work for the blind or a Society for the Prevention of Hurt Feelings.'* It would be fascinating to know what Miss Crooke had told her that led to this stern piece of advice. Other letters give tantalising — and often amusing — glimpses of those early days. Replying to a letter from Miss Crooke, Elliott Humphrey wrote from Switzerland on 12 February 1932, *'First about the false teeth which Meta has eaten up ...'*

On 27 March he was writing, *'Can you give me any idea as to whether or not you are going to want a trainer this summer and if so when?'*

A month later: *'It now looks as if I could let you have a trainer to start early in July. You will like him (G A Gabriel), a very quiet but conscientious boy who speaks very little if any English now (fact is he does not speak much in any language...).'*



“Without you the work could not have been done. I only hope that it has been done in such a manner that you will be glad to have been connected with it and that the men will have done their work so that as they go out with their new eyes you will have a real catch in your throat as you see the shuffle gone from their feet and their heads thrown back as they take a new outlook on life. No words of mine nor of theirs can thank you for your part in helping them to such new liberty as they may find.”

(Elliott Humphrey to Miss Crooke: October 1931)



Gabriel ran two courses, but with the scheme becoming established there was clearly the need for a permanent trainer in Britain. Mrs Eustis was on the point of closing down her Swiss training school to concentrate on The Seeing Eye in the United States and she suggested that one of her best trainers, Captain Nicolai Liakhoff, might be interested in the post. Captain Liakhoff was a former officer of the Russian Imperial Guard who, after leaving Russia, had been forced to earn a living as a taxi driver and waiter in Paris and from whatever casual work he could find, including painting and private chauffeuring.

But one day he encountered a guide dog at work in Potsdam and was so struck by what he saw that he went to work with Mrs Eustis in Switzerland. Faced with the choice of going to America or Britain to continue working with guide dogs he chose the latter because, according to someone who knew him well, it was a monarchy. He arrived in England in October 1933 and was to serve the Association as trainer, director of training, and finally as consultant until his death in 1962.

Although the training programme was now firmly established, finances were a problem. A broadcast appeal by Christopher Stone in 1933, which brought in £800, boosted the funds for a while, but by the following year the financial situation was again becoming difficult. A solution was found with the help of the Tailwaggers' Club which had been formed in 1928. To reduce running costs, finance and committee work were carried out at the Tailwaggers' office in London and at the same time, in October 1934, the title The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was adopted.

Six months after training with their dogs the first four guide dog owners were reporting enthusiastically about their new freedom and independence. Mrs Eustis then lent another trainer, G A Gabriel, who trained four more units successfully. By 1933 guide dogs were clearly in Britain to stay and Captain Nicolai Liakhoff, seen far left at work in Wallasey in 1933 and, left, selecting dogs for training at Leamington, moved from Mrs Eustis's Swiss centre to become the first permanent trainer. He was a key figure in the development of the British guide dog movement until his death in 1962.

Alfred Morgan with Bella giving a demonstration for Members of Parliament in 1936. Morgan lived in Liverpool and was a clerk at the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. He got Bella in 1932 and was the seventh guide dog owner to be trained in Britain.



Another landmark at the end of 1934 was the loan by one of Wallasey's town councillors of a big empty house to be used as a lodging for those being trained. Later, the Wallasey Corporation offered for a peppercorn rent what will always be thought of as the first real 'home' of the Association — 'The Cliff'. This was an almost derelict house on the seashore and with a fierce wind blowing off the Irish Sea piling sand feet high round it the building hardly seemed ideal. But when things had been put into some sort of order staff and students were able for the first time all to be under one roof. The principle that was thus established of providing a 'home' in which the blind students are guests for four weeks is still the basis on which the training centres are run today.

Work at 'The Cliff' went on steadily until the outbreak of war when the house was requisitioned for use by an anti-aircraft battery. Captain Liakhoff was not to be put off and continued the training, the students once again having to stay in lodgings. But with conditions for training becoming difficult it was decided to move from the Wallasey area and in 1941 Edmondscote Manor, a large house in extensive grounds at Leamington Spa, was bought as a training centre. Over the next 30 years four more training centres were opened: Cleve House, Exeter, in 1950; Nuffield House, Bolton, in 1961; Princess Alexandra House, Forfar, in 1965; and Folly Court, Wokingham, in 1977. A sixth centre is expected to begin work in 1982.

During the war arrangements had to be made to ensure that guide dogs could be taken by their owners into air raid shelters and there were special allowances of 35lb of cereal dog food per month. Feeding a dog was quite a problem and an article in the first issue of *Forward*, the Association's journal, in May 1943 suggested the various foods that could be used. It is interesting to note that the writer was rather sceptical about the value of tinned dog foods, '*they are quite good ... useful as a "stand-by" when other meat is not obtainable.*' In a later edition there was a paragraph explaining that government regulations forbade dog food manufacturers adding new customers to their lists but they were willing to supply Captain Liakhoff with some 'iron rations' to be used by owners in an emergency.



The very high success rate in guide dog training is due in large measure to the breeding programme that was developed during the 1960s. The Association's first brood bitch, Reiner, bought in 1959, is seen here with her first litter.

Since the War

After the war, in 1948, the Association moved from its shared accommodation with the Tailwaggers' Club to its own office at 81 Piccadilly. At the same time Miss Lilian Shrimpton, who had been secretary since 1936 to both organisations and a dedicated worker for guide dogs, became the Association's first full-time secretary.

A journalist once wrote of Captain Liakhoff that he had '*by a rare blend of faith, knowledge and fortitude ... brought the guide dog movement in this country to an impressive pitch of development.*' It was a well-deserved tribute and he could justifiably have added 'charm and devotion to the ideals he had set himself.' The affection in which he was held was demonstrated at a luncheon presentation to him that took place on 17 October 1953 to mark the fact that he had devoted 20 years' work to the Association. The speeches that were made, the personal tributes from guide dog owners present, and the messages and telegrams that were read out (including one from the Queen) all underlined the regard felt for the Captain. Lady Freda Valentine, who responded to the toast of the Association, reminded the guests that they owed a great debt also to Lady Schuster (who had joined the Committee in 1932) since it was she who had persuaded the Captain to come to England to train guide dogs instead of going to America as he had originally intended.

In 1954 Princess Alexandra agreed to become President (later Patron) of the Association and in the following year visited both Leamington and Exeter training centres. Royalty's support for the Association had been growing steadily ever since the Queen, when she was still Princess Elizabeth, had in 1948 personally given a guide dog to Mr D P Pretorius, a blinded South African soldier. It was the first guide dog ever to be used in that country.

The number of dogs trained each year had been rising slowly and steadily. The figure for the year ending September 1956 vividly illustrated how much the organisation was growing. One hundred and two men and women were trained that year — almost equal to the total number trained in the whole of the six pre-war years. There were now seven trainers and, most significant for the future, 12 apprentices.

One of the constant aims in training dogs had always been to try to reduce the number which, after a lot of time and effort spent on them, proved unsuitable. A first step towards this goal was taken in 1956 when some specially selected puppies were purchased and placed with 'walkers' who looked after them and, most important, accustomed them to noisy traffic, crowds, restaurants, shopping areas and public transport of all kinds before sending them back to the training centre. By 1958 nearly 60 puppies were being walked. The scheme was still experimental.

Princess Alexandra became the Association's President (later Patron) in 1954 and has given her support generously over the years. She is seen here at the opening of the Wokingham training centre after unveiling a plaque acknowledging the part played by the BBC's Blue Peter programme in supporting guide dogs. With her is Brian Moody, controller at the centre.



Some animals were still failing even at the puppy stage, but the foundations had been laid for a scheme that was to prove more and more important.

During the sixties puppy-rearing schemes developed at all the training centres and a breeding programme was started at Leamington. The problem of breeding for guide dog work had been discussed for many years. A Dutch visitor to the Leamington centre in 1953 implied in an article that he wrote for *Forward* that the reason why so many dogs eventually proved unsuitable at that time was that too many hybrid dogs were chosen.

The Association's first brood bitch, an alsatian named Reiner, was bought in 1959 and over the next 10 years the quantity and quality of pups coming from the breeding programme grew steadily. Fewer puppies were having to be bought from outside sources and the proportion finally qualifying as guide dogs was showing a significant increase. In 1970, the breeding and puppy-walking organisation moved into its own premises at Tollgate House, not far from the Leamington Spa training centre.

The number of breeding bitches was increasing steadily and it was therefore decided to ease the workload at Tollgate House by farming most of them out to people who, for want of a better

Puppy-walkers, who bring up the Association's pups from the age of six weeks until their training starts at about a year, perform an invaluable service in allowing future guide dogs to grow up in a family and to become accustomed to the many features of town life that they will have to encounter later without being distracted.

By the end of the 1960s the breeding and puppy-walking programme had grown to the point where it needed its own premises and in 1970 it moved to Tollgate House, near Warwick. Deputy kennel manager Eileen Cobb is one of the staff who help to look after the hundreds of pups born there each year. By 1981 the Association had over 120 brood bitches and about a quarter that number of stud dogs.





term, have come to be known as 'brood bitch holders'. Today, as many as 80 per cent of the puppies bred in this way qualify as guide dogs — a very different picture from the early days. Many of the animals that fail for one reason or another as guide dogs are, nevertheless, admirably suited for other tasks and finish up with the RAF, the prison service, the police and HM Customs.

In the very early days alsatians had almost exclusively been used and were usually dogs that had been donated or bought for two or three pounds apiece. Later, other breeds came to be preferred. The essential characteristics were that they should be willing workers, used to people and other animals and not afraid of noise or crowds. Today, the bulk used are bitch labrador retrievers, followed by golden retrievers and alsatians, and occasionally other breeds and some cross-breeds. The breeding programme is based on over 120 bitches and about a quarter of that number of stud dogs.

No association can succeed without the hard work of its members, organisers and supporters and The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has been particularly lucky in this respect. From the very earliest days people have worked unselfishly to promote the cause of the Association, many over a long period of years. Lady Schuster, who joined the Committee in 1932, worked tirelessly for it until her death in 1950. Her husband Sir Victor Schuster, who succeeded Captain H E Hobbs as honorary treasurer in 1935, was chairman for two separate periods until 1953 and continued as vice-chairman until his death in 1963. It was his generosity that enabled the Association to survive the financial problems encountered during the Second World War.



An instructor introduces a blind student to the handle that will later be the link with his guide dog.

Learning to avoid obstacles and (right) to sit at kerbs.





Lord Lanesborough has served the Association since 1953, first as chairman and now as president. He was succeeded as chairman in 1965 by Sir Joseph Napier, who held that office for 10 years and continues to serve the Association as a vice-president. Since 1975 the chairmanship has been held by Mr Kenneth Butler, and he handed over at the beginning of 1981 to Mr Ian Findlay.

Lady Freda Valentine has served the Association for over 40 years, acting as honorary treasurer from 1939 to 1977 and continuing still as a member of the Council. Her great contribution to the guide dog movement was recognised by the award of a CBE in 1979.

But it is not only those at the head of the Association who have worked unceasingly to keep it on the right road. It has always been a basic principle of the Association that lack of money should not prevent a blind person from becoming a guide dog owner. When the work began the cost of training a dog and its owner was only £50. Year by year the cost has risen steadily but fortunately year by year the number of people in the local branches actively engaged in raising money has also grown. The Association receives no financial aid from the State so voluntary support is essential. It comes from youth organisations, senior citizens' clubs, sports clubs and pubs, from industry and HM Forces. The different ways in which money has been raised would fill a book. There have been fashion shows, gymkhanas, the sponsoring of schoolchildren for a multitude of tasks, wine and cheese parties, dances, flower shows, garden parties, rummage sales, collections in factories and offices. The collection of silver paper and milk bottle tops has for many years been a money-maker for the Association (although even in 1954 it took 22 million tops to raise enough money to train a dog). The success of all these events has been due to the devoted work of the branches scattered throughout the country. There are over 300 of these, 80 of them having been established over a quarter of a century.



Nothing is neglected in training – even getting used to being carried on escalators. A dog is trained for seven or eight months before being paired with a blind student.



Time to relax for the dogs while a class at Wokingham training centre catches up on some theory. Students spend four weeks at the training centre before returning home with their dogs. Instructors visit them shortly afterwards to ensure that they are working together satisfactorily and to help with any problems. Aftercare visits then continue on a regular basis.



Traffic training: dog and student have been taught separately what to do in these circumstances; now they must practise it together until they are working safely as a team.



Towards the end of his training a student threads his way through a busy market street watched by an instructor.

One of the most successful means of giving publicity to the Association and explaining its aims, and so indirectly helping its finances, has been for the guide dog owners themselves to give talks about their experiences to women's institutes, towns-women's guilds, rotary clubs, round tables, schools, church organisations and other similar bodies. Thousands of talks have been given by the speakers' panel, which now numbers several hundreds.

Over the years the Association has faced and overcome immense difficulties, not merely financial and physical. As Captain Liakhoff once wrote in *Forward*: *'Neither the blind people themselves nor the seeing public were ready to believe in the seriousness of the work, or to recognise its psychological value.'* One of the greatest changes has, indeed, been the development of an entirely different attitude of the public towards the use of guide dogs. In 1931 there were not even any dogs in England working for the police, the Army or the RAF. The public was strongly against the idea of making a dog work. Miss Muriel Crooke once described how the first trainers were daily exasperated by the way people physically tried to stop them doing their work, abusing them and declaring that what they were doing was cruel, silly and useless. It was only when people saw the obvious delight of the first trainees at being able to walk freely and fast that they began to realise the importance of guide dogs.

The ownership of a guide dog brings freedom and independence, often to an extraordinary degree. This is borne out by the remarkable diversity of employment of guide dog owners. Sometimes the work may even mean special training for a dog since it will have to become accustomed to an unusual environment. Gone are the days when the only work of the blind man was associated with such activities as basket making. Guide dog owners can be found in almost any activity — in factories and workshops, offices and the professions, as farmers and salesmen.



Learning to groom their dogs properly is an important part of the students' training programme.

“Many people consider that the Association's main work is in training dogs and that once the dog is trained everything is practically accomplished. This is not so. The preparation of the dog . . . may be compared with the making of a surgical instrument; it is very necessary, but in itself only a preliminary. The joining of the man and dog into one inseparable unit is the Association's real work, comparable not with tool-making but with skilled surgery, because it brings . . . healing and relief” (Liakhoff)

There are computer programmers, civil servants, clergymen, lecturers, teachers, solicitors, writers, broadcasters, physiotherapists, doctors, stockbrokers, librarians, museum officials, social welfare workers, typists and telephonists, fitters, storemen and engineers.

Today, the Association remains true to the basic philosophy of the founders. This was expressed very clearly in the fifties by Captain Liakhoff and another trainer, G F Sheppard. Liakhoff wrote:

'Many people consider that the Association's main work is in training dogs and that once the dog is trained everything is practically accomplished. This is not so. The preparation of the dog... may be compared with the making of a surgical instrument; it is very necessary, but in itself only a preliminary. The joining of the man and dog into one inseparable unit is the Association's real work, comparable not with tool-making but with skilled surgery, because it brings... healing and relief.'

Sheppard, describing the way the dogs are trained, went on to say: *'The second, more difficult part, comes when the blind owner has to be trained with the dog at the completion of the dog's own training. Pairing the people and the dogs is a matter which calls on the trainer's skill in both canine and human psychology. There is more to it than giving a big dog to a large man, and a smaller one to a little woman; temperaments have to be blended as well. The man and the dog at the end of their month's training together are beginning to form one unit rather than two separate entities and it is at this stage that they are ready to go to the man's home.'*

This stage is followed by the most critical one of all, when the guide dog owner is at last on his own. But the Association never loses touch with guide dog owners and this after-care is an essential part of its work. At first it was necessarily on a very limited scale but by 1962 regular visits were being made to guide dog owners throughout the country. Special attention is always paid to any owner with problems and to seeing guide dogs which are nearing retirement age. The visitor may interview an owner's employer if there are problems accommodating the dog at work or he may advise a dog owner on the need for a refresher training course. Some idea of the scale of aftercare work can be envisaged from the fact that there are now nearly 3,000 guide dog owners in Britain. Replacing the dogs when they reach the end of their working lives is always given priority and accounts for about one half of the output of the training centres.

The growth of the Association has put an increasing strain on the head office. In 1967 the administration moved from 81 Piccadilly to Uxbridge Road, Ealing, but this eventually proved too small and in 1978 a move was made to the present premises — part of a Georgian terrace in Park Street, Windsor, almost in the shadow of the Castle.



A guide dog works for no more than a few hours each day. The rest of the time it leads the life of an ordinary family pet, with plenty of fun and freedom thrown in. When the time comes to retire it often stays on in the family as a pet but if this is not possible there is no difficulty in finding a good home for it.

*Above: Tim Pennick and Whisky.
Below: Chris Bridgman and Nita.*





It has always been a basic principle of the Association that lack of money should not prevent a blind person from becoming a guide dog owner. No charge other than a nominal 50p is therefore made for the dog. No financial aid is given by the State and so voluntary support is essential to meet the very high cost of breeding and training guide dogs and maintaining aftercare services. The solid bedrock of this support comes from over 300 voluntary branches scattered throughout the country, and an astonishing variety of fund-raising events is organised by clubs, pubs and other groups. This stand at the Leicester Home Life exhibition in October 1975 is typical of many others.

Looking back, The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association can be seen as a monument to the efforts of countless willing hands. It is almost invidious to mention names, although key figures stand out — Muriel Crooke, Lady Schuster, Captain Liakhoff, Lady Freda Valentine. But the name for which every guide dog owner must be thankful above all others is unquestionably that of the American Mrs Dorothy Eustis, whose vision, energy and generosity inspired so many others, in Britain and elsewhere, to follow in her footsteps.

Another illustration of the imagination and energy that goes into fund-raising for guide dogs is the "paw trek" that has been held twice in the grounds of Longleat House.



Freedom with a guide dog

The freedom which a guide dog can bring to a blind person's life is not always as spectacular as some of the examples on the following pages. A guide dog can mean simply the freedom to go shopping at will, meet the children from school or catch a bus to work.

But to each guide dog owner that freedom is more precious than words can tell.

Chris Bridgman and Nita are regular travellers on British Rail.





When Malcolm Cannell goes to sea his guide dog Andy goes too.

▶
With Whisky as his guide and companion, Tim Pennick is just another undergraduate at Kent University.

Julia Howlett's job as a micro-processor consultant takes her all over the country, often by air. Beulah is also a seasoned traveller.







Lorna Smith and Ronda step out confidently in Wokingham.

►
Negotiating the busy streets of London's West End presents few problems for solicitor John Claricoat and Truffle.

Peter Stock is a teacher at St. Mark's School, Godalming, and guide dog Ben leads the way on a field studies outing.





How you can help...

There are many ways in which people can help. Adult groups, schools, youth organisations and numerous other bodies and individuals can raise money through sponsored events such as walks and spell-ins. Concerts, jumble sales and similar activities appeal to others. The Association also encourages sponsorship projects by setting target figures for groups that wish to raise money for training guide dogs. Inscribed photographs or trophies are presented to groups reaching these targets.

Fund raising for the Association is organised through about 300 local branches that have been formed by volunteer supporters. Anyone who would like to help in these activities should contact the appropriate regional organiser at

the address below.

Regional organisers will also arrange for talks by guide dog owners to groups that would like to hear about the benefits of guide dog ownership and meet someone whose life has been enriched in this way.

Films and literature about guide dogs are available from Head Office in Windsor.

Although most guide dogs come from the Association's own breeding and puppy-rearing programme, some puppies and young adult dogs are purchased (sometimes donated) from other sources. The breeds mainly used are labradors, golden retrievers and alsatians. Adult dogs must be at least 19 inches to the shoulder, used to people, other animals and traffic, and in the age range of 10

months to two years. Anyone with puppies or young adult dogs to offer should contact one of the training centres or the breeding and puppy-rearing centre.

Help is needed by the Association in rearing its puppies and there are a number of 'puppy-walkers' within a convenient distance of the training centres and the breeding and puppy-rearing centre who foster puppies until they are ready to be taken back for training. Anyone interested in becoming a puppy-walker should contact the nearest training centre or the breeding centre. Most of the Association's brood bitches also live with families and there are occasional opportunities to help in this way.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Head Office:

Alexandra House,
9/11 Park Street,
Windsor, Berks SL4 1JR
(Public Relations Officer:
Mr P Ireson)

Scottish Office:

104 West Campbell Street,
Glasgow G2 4TY
(Scottish Representative:
Lt Col G D Dunlop
Scottish Organiser:
Mr A F Duguid)

Regional Organisers:

North East: Mr J W Bailey,
125 Tadcaster Road,
York YO2 2QJ

North West: Mr P B Frost,
8 Nicholas Street, Chester,
Cheshire CH1 2YZ

Midlands: Mr C P H Whittle,
68 Shakespeare Drive,
Kidderminster,
Worcestershire DY10 3QY

South West: Mr D J H Thomas,
'Applegarth', Coxley Wick,
Wells, Somerset BA15 1QX

East Anglia: Mr A T Castleton,
Rooms 14 & 15, 30 Park Lane,
Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8AX

South East: Mr E Heys,
218 Farnborough Road,
Farnborough, Hants GU14 7JW

Greater London: Mrs A Thair,
37 Clarence Road, Bickley,
Bromley, Kent BR1 2DB

Training Centres:

Nuffield House, Lowndes Street,
Bolton, Lancs BL1 4QA
Controller: Mr S R Lambert

Cleve House, Exwick Lane,
Exeter, Devon EX4 2AR
Controller: Mr J P Weeks

Princess Alexandra House,
Dundee Road, Forfar,
Angus DD8 1JA
Controller: Mr D Duncan

Edmondscote Manor,
Warwick New Road,
Leamington Spa,
Warwicks CV32 6AM
Controller: Mr S R Wright

Folly Court, Barkham Road,
Wokingham, Berks RG11 4BT
Controller: Mr B J Moody

Breeding and Puppy Walking Centre:

Tollgate House, Banbury Road,
Bishop's Tachbrook,
Warwicks CV33 9QJ
Manager: Mr D Freeman

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FIFTY YEARS FORWARD: THE
STORY OF GUIDE DOGS IN
BRITAIN.

(March 1981)

Date Due

<i>Reference Copy</i>			

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
15 WEST 16th STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10011

